



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

ROD R. BLAGOJEVICH - GOVERNOR

NEWS

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Gov. Blagojevich, Gov. Blunt announce agreement to construct a new Mississippi River Bridge in Metro East

Illinois and Missouri agree to a \$640 million project that will not require tolls and will enhance traffic safety, reduce congestion and spur job creation; A portion of Illinois' funding is contingent on passage of Illinois Works

ST. LOUIS – Governor Rod R. Blagojevich of Illinois and Governor Matt Blunt of Missouri announced an agreement to construct a new four-lane bridge across the Mississippi River from East St. Louis to St. Louis that will improve traffic safety and reduce congestion across the region.

The two Governors announced that construction of the new cable-stayed bridge, which will not require a toll, could begin as soon as 2010. The new span and connecting roadways will cost \$640 million and will be paid for through a combination of federal and state funding. The project will be jointly managed by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) and the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT). It is expected to take four to six years to complete.

"We are here today to announce an historic agreement that will improve the quality of life and create jobs for residents on both sides of the Mississippi River," said Gov. Blagojevich. "This new bridge will reduce congestion and make it easier for Illinoisans to get back and forth across the river, whether it's for work, going to a Cardinals game or any other reason. And, perhaps most importantly – we are not building a toll bridge. I applaud Gov. Blunt and his administration for working with us to make this project a reality."

"My office has been working with our federal, state and local leaders and the state of Illinois to reach this important agreement for transportation infrastructure in the St. Louis region," Gov. Blunt (R-Missouri) said. "Both states benefit from a strong and growing economy in the St. Louis area and this agreement will help make Missouri's economy even stronger. A new Mississippi River bridge will help to sustain economic growth and development in the region,

enhance the safety of our citizens, increase productivity for workers and families while protecting our environment by reducing congestion.”

"Today we are moving forward with a plan that will reduce the traffic congestion and travel delays that are faced by everyone who regularly crosses the Mississippi River," said Rep. Hoffman (D-Collinsville). "It will not be a toll bridge and Illinois is making a substantial financial commitment to the bridge. However, to fully fund this project, the Illinois General Assembly will still have to pass a capital bill that will include \$49 million for the New Mississippi River Bridge."

"This has been a long process," said Congressman Jerry Costello (D-Illinois). "I am pleased that the two states have reached an agreement to build the new bridge."

"IDOT is pleased that we were able to work out an agreement with our counterpart agency from Missouri that paves the way for an affordable new bridge on which we could begin construction within two years," said IDOT Secretary Milton R. Sees. "The new span will meet our goals of reducing congestion and traffic crashes while boosting the economy in the Metro East area – and it will accomplish this without a toll."

Gov. Blagojevich made the announcement just more than a week after he proposed a budget plan for Fiscal Year 2009 that includes *Illinois Works* – a comprehensive building plan to improve aging roads, bridges and mass transit, as well as university and school buildings in communities throughout the state. *Illinois Works* includes \$49 million for the new Mississippi River Bridge project. This funding is contingent on passage of the capital funding plan by the Illinois General Assembly.

Gov. Blagojevich is urging members of the General Assembly to approve *Illinois Works* to rebuild vital infrastructure and also stimulate the economy. *Illinois Works* is expected to support 725,000 new jobs statewide.

The total estimated project cost of \$640 million includes \$306 million for the bridge and approaches, \$264 million for new roadway connections in Illinois and \$70 million for new roadway connections in Missouri. Federal funding will cover \$239 million of the cost, Illinois will contribute \$313 million (including \$49 million from a capital bill) and Missouri will contribute \$88 million in state funds.

The agreement between the two states will allow for construction of one bridge in the location originally approved by Federal Highway Administration in 2001 for two, four-lane bridges, a mile north of the Martin Luther King Bridge in St. Louis. The two states agreed to scale back the original plan and consider other options in 2004 after the estimated cost escalated to over \$1 billion.

The state of Missouri had pushed to finance the new bridge by charging tolls. But this proposal was adamantly opposed by Gov. Blagojevich, Rep. Hoffman, IDOT and other Illinois leaders because the tolls would have disproportionately affected Illinois residents heading to jobs on the Missouri side of the river.

Gov. Blagojevich offered a compromise proposal in 2006 of a four-lane addition to the existing Martin Luther King bridge, called the “Coupler” option, that could have been financed without tolls.

However, in April 2007 MoDOT agreed to abandon the toll bridge proposal and to enter negotiations with IDOT to build an affordable bridge at the site originally approved for the New Mississippi River Bridge.

Under the new agreement a single bridge will be constructed initially and will have design accommodations for a companion bridge to be built in the future. The new span, with a design life of 100 years, will carry two lanes in each direction with room to expand to three lanes.

The new bridge will connect I-70 at the I-55/64/70 interchange in East St. Louis to I-70 near Cass Avenue on the Missouri side. The connection from I-55/70/64 will include a roadway connection in Illinois along the I-64 connector alignment to the new bridge. A partial interchange in Missouri will be constructed with existing I-70 near Cass Avenue.

The New Mississippi River Bridge is expected to initially carry a traffic volume of about 40,000 vehicles per day and up to 55,000 vehicles per day by 2030. It will provide significant congestion relief for the Polar Street Bridge, which now carries I-55, I-64 and I-70 and handles roughly 115,000 to 125,000 vehicles daily.

For more information about the project, go to: <http://www.newriverbridge.org/>